

The Festival of All Saints – Pr. Faugstad sermon
Daniel 3:13-28: “The World’s Fury Cannot Harm God’s Holy Ones.”
November 1/2, 2025 | Saude, Jerico, & Redeemer Lutheran Churches

In Nomine Iesu

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Lord God, heavenly Father, in Your divine wisdom and fatherly goodness You cause Your children to bear the cross, and send many afflictions upon us to subdue our sinful flesh, and to enliven our hearts to faith, hope, and unceasing prayer: We beseech You to have mercy upon us, and graciously deliver us out of our trials and afflictions, so that we may perceive Your grace and fatherly help, and with all the saints forever praise and worship You; through Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one true God, now and forever. Amen. (*Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, p. 150)

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. (Rom. 1:7, etc.)

The sermon text for today is written in the third chapter of the Book of Daniel. We read selected verses in Jesus’ name:

Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” / Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” / Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. Because the king’s order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace. / Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.” / Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of

their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants, who trusted in Him, and set aside the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.” (ESV)

These are Your words, heavenly Father. Sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen. (Joh. 17:17)

In Christ Jesus, who leads us in triumphal procession through the fiery trials of this world until we reach the blessed gates of His heavenly kingdom, dear fellow redeemed:

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood out. It wasn’t just that as Israelites, they looked different than the Babylonians. They stood out in how they conducted themselves, how they approached their work and their life. It started when they were young. They were among the exiles brought back to Babylon after Jerusalem was overcome. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, chose them and other youths to learn “*the literature and language*” of their captors (Dan. 1:4).

These three were close friends of Daniel who served as the spokesman for their little group, and who later wrote the book that bears his name. God blessed the studies and abilities of these four Israelites, so that they rose higher than their fellow students. The king recognized their talents and selected them to stand in his presence. “*And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom*” (1:20).

When God gave Daniel the ability to interpret one of the king’s dreams, the king set him over the whole province of Babylon and all its wise men. Daniel then asked that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego also be elevated in the province of Babylon (2:48-49). It was quite a promotion for these Israelite exiles! And no doubt, it caused great jealousy toward them among the other Babylonian officials.

As favorable as their situation seemed, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were still servants of a king and administration that did not acknowledge the true God but worshipped gods of their own making. This is highlighted in today’s reading. King Nebuchadnezzar set up a huge statue overlaid with gold that rose up ninety feet in the air. It would have been seen from miles around, especially with the sunlight shining off it.

The king was very proud of his statue. He summoned his government officials to attend the dedication of this monument. When the music began to play, the people were ordered to “*fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar [had] set up*” (3:5). What’s more, they were told in no uncertain terms that “*whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace*” (v. 6). If the people couldn’t be *coaxed*, they could be *compelled*.

So the music began to play, and the people dutifully bowed down—except for three: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—with Daniel apparently away at this time. If you had been a friend of theirs, what would you have said to them? “Just bow down, guys! Think of how much good you are doing in your government positions. Do you want to throw that all away? You don’t

have to worship any false gods; just worship the true God when you bow down. No one has to know. God will understand." Is that what you would say? Or would you stand, knees shaking, pale-faced, right next to them?

It's hard to know what we would do in a situation like this. We like to imagine we would stand there bravely ready to face death for the Lord. But we also think about the times when our life was not on the line, and we still failed to confess the truth because we were afraid of being made fun of or rejected. Examples like this one with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are good for us because they show us the courage of fellow believers, and especially, they show us the faithfulness of God.

In the Holy Gospel for today, we hear Jesus promising His people: *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (Mat. 5:10). He told His disciples, *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"* (Mat. 16:24). The life of believers in the world, He said, would not be easy. *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you"* (Joh. 15:18). But the hatred of the world cannot prevail. *"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world"* (Joh. 16:33).

The believer in Christ will stand out in this world. That's because we aren't made for this sinful world. We are made for God's eternal kingdom where there is only righteousness, peace, and joy. We would much rather fit in there than fit in here! We were made heirs of His glorious kingdom starting with our Baptism. That is when the Lord called you *"out of darkness into his marvelous light"* (1Pe. 2:9). That is when He called you to stand while everyone else bows to the idols of the world. That is when He called you to continuously acknowledge Him before men, so you would also be acknowledged before your heavenly Father (Mat. 10:32).

At your Baptism, you were called to be a holy one, a saint, before God. You don't have to be like Mother Theresa to be considered a saint. You don't need to be subject to a vote of your Christian peers. You are a saint, a holy one, by faith in Jesus Christ, the holy One. It is the sacrifice of His holy body that paid for your sins. It is His perfect keeping of God's Law that has been credited to you. It is His holiness that covers you. You are not holy because of what you have done for God. You are holy because of what He has done for you.

So He does not owe you anything; He has already given you everything! But what do you owe Him? Nothing that could earn you greater favor with Him or a higher place in His kingdom. As one of His blessed holy ones, what you freely offer to Him is all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind. These are not perfect offerings by any means since everything we have and do is corrupted by our sin, but He uses them for great things. He employs you to carry out His gracious work in your family, your workplace, your congregation, your community. Even small acts of faithfulness, small moments of courage, and small demonstrations of love make a big difference.

But you cannot expect the world to pat you on the back for speaking the truth and for doing what is good and right. No one spoke sweeter words or did more wonderful things than Jesus, and He was still nailed to a cross to die while His enemies stood around Him jeering. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did nothing wrong, but they became objects of the king's furious rage. When they would not obey his command to *"serve [his] gods or worship the golden image that [he*

had] set up... He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated." If they wouldn't do what he said, then they would burn.

Their response? *"So be it; we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."* Thanks be to God for their faith! Thanks be to God for their courage! They feared neither the king nor his fiery furnace. They feared the LORD their God (Mat. 10:28). They were resigned to the possibility that this was the day of their death. Whatever happened, they trusted that their lives were in God's hands.

Nebuchadnezzar had them bound and wrapped in layers of their clothing. The furnace was so hot that the flames killed the soldiers who threw them in. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not burn. Watching with astonishment, the king asked, *"Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?... But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."* The LORD had sent His angel to protect His saints. It may be that the Man walking in the fire with them was the pre-incarnate Christ Himself, the Son of God.

This is how close our Lord is to us. We are not able to see Him like the three men did. But He is as near as the preaching of His Word and the administration of His Sacraments. He comes again and again to forgive us our sins, confirm us in the faith, and place His holiness over us and in us.

These are the gifts He regularly gave to our dear friends who departed within the last year: Marketta, Ann, Harold, Paul, and other friends in the faith. They faced difficult trials in their life by which the devil wanted to destroy their faith. But God is faithful. He never forgot about them or left them, and now their souls are safely in His holy presence.

He is preparing you for the same blessed end. The holy waters that cleansed them and all the saints triumphant are the same holy waters that cleanse you. The holy words they heard are the same holy words you hear. The holy food and drink they received is the same holy food and drink you receive. Where God's holy ones now stand in His presence, so you will stand.

But there are more trials to face before that time comes. There are more golden idols to tempt you and fiery furnaces to threaten you. The apostle Peter wrote, *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed"* (1Pe. 4:12-13). You share in Christ's sufferings now, so that you will rejoice when He returns to bring His people to His kingdom, body and soul.

He is with you always until that Day comes, powerfully present though unseen. And He will rescue you from the narrow chamber of your grave when He comes again in all His glory. This is why **The World's Fury Cannot Harm God's Holy Ones**. You are safe with your Lord. *"For to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phi. 1:21).

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.

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